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John Jones Esq. M.A.

NOTES

ON THE

DOMINION OF CANADA.

By an Old Canadian Surveyor

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PAGE 2. Read—lawless “*Roughs*” and plausible “*Hypocrites*.”

PAGE 5... Read—“*Departments*” wherever the word occurs.

CANADA:

A long, narrow strip of country, extending from the Atlantic, on the East, to the Pacific, on the West—bounded on the South by the United States, and on the North by regions of rock, ice, and snow, extending away to the North Pole, and completing, together with the above strip, what is now called the Dominion.

The population of this Dominion, (including blacks, whites and Indians) is about four millions; the bulk of them poor, and living from hand to mouth, by their daily exertions.

They are ruled over by eight Governors and as many sets of Executive Councillors, and have their laws made for them by eight separate legislatures.

But as these eight Governors and councils and eight legislatures, are not found sufficient for administering the affairs and making laws for these four millions of poor people, they are, by the present constitution of Government, allowed the privilege of electing annually some thousands more of councillors, called “Township” and “County” councillors, whose business it is to impose taxes on their neighbors; appropriate a portion of those taxes towards any local object, and another portion towards paying themselves, and enabling them to pay their grog and grub bills at the tavern adjacent to their place of meeting.

The bulk of the population, as said above, are poor, being

supported, to a considerable extent, at both the East and West ends of the strip, by fishing, lumbering and mining.

The agricultural parts are principally within the Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, together with a continuation of the strip, West of the latter Province, extending to the base of the Rocky Mountains. In Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, there are agricultural districts, but they are limited in extent, the prevailing feature of these portions of the Dominion being rocky roughness, which also, to a *greater* extent, is the character of the greater part of the surface of British Columbia.

In Religious profession the population includes all the sects to be found in any country.

In Politics they are divided into two parties calling themselves, respectively, Conservatives and Reformers—the former including the greater portion of the lawless roughs of the country, while to the latter the greater portion of plausible hypocrites seem to attach themselves.

The leaders of these two parties are about equally patriotic and unselfish, and both devoutly loyal (in profession) to the British crown and government, and, no doubt, equally disinterestedly so.

They each, also, have their newspaper "organs," whose business it is, reciprocally, each to write down the opposing party, and to elevate their own, in doing which, also, they show themselves equally apt in ignoring truth, and in inventing misrepresentation. The two most prominent "organs" of this kind in the Province of Ontario, are the *Toronto Globe* and the *Toronto Mail*—the former of long standing and continued practice in this kind of warfare; the latter more recently brought into life, probably with the view in the minds of its party of checking or counteracting the misrepresentations of the other, by the use of similar weapons.

But to return to the country itself. Notwithstanding the above general description of the Dominion at large, it nevertheless includes, within the limits of the Province of Ontario, one tolerably compact district, comprising about eighteen thousand square miles, or twelve millions of acres, of as excellent agricultural country (already to a great extent settled and cultivated, though still affording room for some tens of thousands additional population) as any to be found on the continent of America, while in point of healthiness of climate, there is probably none to be found more so.

This favorable agricultural part comprises the North shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie, from the Bay of Quinte to Sandwich and Sarnia, and extends northwardly to Lake Huron. It produces well the several kinds of grain, as wheat, barley, rye, oats, &c.; is favorable for all kinds of vegetables, and for fruits of almost every kind, as apples, plums, cherries, &c., and, in the Lake Erie districts, peaches and grapes.

The Northern shores of Lakes Huron and Superior, presenting a general surface of granite rock in irregular ridges, are unfit for settlement; but in various parts, a little way inland, are found considerable quantities of good white pine, which is being speedily converted into lumber at the various saw mills established on the shores for that purpose, and sent to the Albany and Chicago markets, &c. This rough and rocky district of country seems also to have interspersed through it various kinds of minerals, as copper, iron, lead, silver, gold, &c. Only two mines, however, have as yet been fairly opened and worked: that is, the Silver Mine at Silver Islet, on Lake Superior, and the Bruce Copper Mine, on the shore of Huron.

The Province of Manitoba, to the West of this extensive barren district, is described as a very good agricultural country, producing all kinds of grain and vegetables, with easy cultivation; and, although in high Northern latitude, the climate is described by

those who have wintered there, as being not more severe than Kingston or Toronto; although, being to a great extent an open prairie country, there must always be liability to much inconvenience from drifting snows, &c.

The want of wood, too, for building or fencing purposes, is also, of course, a serious inconvenience. As to fuel, it is known that there are extensive coal fields at some two or three hundred miles West of the Red River settlements, in the Saskatchewan country; and means will, no doubt, soon be provided for bringing it to where it is wanted.

There is plenty of room yet in this Province, and in the "fertile belt" or strip westward, for the formation of settlements; and the North branch of the Saskatchewan river, which traverses the belt from West to East, it is asserted, can, with but moderate difficulty, be rendered navigable for nearly a thousand miles, or almost to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, which mountains, with all their height and ruggedness, intervene between the West end of the belt or strip and the Pacific Province of "British Columbia," which itself, as said before, is for the most part a rugged and rocky district, affording but comparatively little extent of agricultural surface, being, as also before stated, more of a fishing, mining and lumbering country.

The general wintry character of the climate of the Dominion (the very name of Canada giving an idea of frost and cold) always has been, and continues to be, a bar in the way of the Province receiving any considerable portion of that kind of emigration which, by the parties bringing in means with them, could help to develop the country's resources. And what is wanted is, that we should, as far as in our power, provide some special advantage to hold forth, which might, in the eyes of such emigrants, appear, as far as possible, a counterbalancing consideration against this natural disadvantage, and induce them to come in and fill up the

now partially settled districts which are really desirable. And there are no other means so apparently in our power as the reduction of our taxation to a lower rate than in other countries which present open fields for emigration.

But this will not be brought about until a total change is adopted in the manner and expense of administering our public affairs. Thus, for instance,—

Abolish seven out of our eight governments and legislatures. Let the Province (the Dominion) be ruled over by one government, and have its laws made by one legislature. (This is done in the neighboring State of New York, with a population the same in numbers as that of the Dominion, and with ten times the wealth.)

Organize a government on principles of economy, correspondent with the circumstances and comparative importance of the country.

Let the electoral districts be so enlarged that the one legislature shall consist of not more than half the number of members now composing the House of Commons.

Let the public business to be looked after be divided into so many departments as necessary, and no more.

Let the persons appointed to the headships of these departments be so appointed on account of fitness, and let them, when appointed, be expected to be always at their posts, and giving their best attention to the business of the department.

Abolish the plan of appointing outside commissioners, every now and then, to look after some part of the duty appertaining to the Head of any department.

These and other changes which could and ought to be adopted

in the constitution of government, and in the administration of public affairs, would produce a saving of some millions of dollars annually, and by so much reduce the taxation of the country; and that, too, not only without impairing, but consistently with increasing efficiency in government.

The taxation in many of the counties is at present extravagant, amounting to a little rent on the property, and is felt very oppressive, particularly amongst new and struggling backwoods settlers, who sometimes are obliged to sell some part of their little stock to make up such taxes.

Is there any probability that such changes as these, though obviously required in the interests of the community at large, will be brought about, or attempted, by the people whom, by our votes, we have placed in charge of those interests? There is no probability while they are benefitted, or think themselves benefitted, by the present organization of government—an organization which enables them, when they will, to put their hands into the public treasury and help themselves and one another to increase of salary, without first consulting their constituents on the subject; and at the same time, affords them an opportunity to evade or neglect the duties of their offices with impunity.

It is useless to expect such a thing! Is there, then, no redress, or no escaping from evils which we know are only perpetuated and increased, needlessly, by those whom we have ourselves, as said above, placed in charge of our affairs?

Leave out the unfaithful members at the next general election! will be said, and they themselves will remind us that we have the right to do so; but experience shows that in the common way this will never be done to an extent to be of any use; and either the same men, or others possessed of no more patriotism or unselfishness, will find means at an election time to obtain the popular vote.

There is a way still open, however, (and which, in the country's interests, should be adopted without delay) for attempting an improved order of government and of the administration of public affairs, which, instead of seeming to have for its object the pampering and excusing from duty the paid public servants, shall rather have in view to promote the good of the whole, and to protect and save from burdensome taxation the nine-tenths of the community who compose the working, industrious, and producing classes, thus,—

Let meetings be called in the various municipalities, or, what would be very convenient, let the various County Councils throughout the country take up the subject, and appoint delegates to meet at any particular time and place to deliberate and determine what particular changes are practicable, and what are desirable, in the present constitution of government, to the end of promoting the desired object; and having so determined as to requisite changes, resolve that they shall be carried out; and if so resolving, there will be nothing in the way of their being carried out accordingly. The authorities of the land are authorities created by the people themselves, and placed, for the time, in charge of the interests of those who elected them, and, of course, have no right to resist any changes which those whose servants they profess to be, may deliberately and determinedly desire; and should there be a necessity for reference to the Imperial Government or Parliament in the matter, it is certain that no objection would be made in that quarter to any such changes being adopted.

The enormous expense of conducting Canadian government, as at present constituted, is probably without a parallel, when the circumstances of the country, and the numbers and circumstances of the population, are taken into consideration, and is probably four times as much as the cost of government of the same amount of population, with ten times the wealth, in the neighboring State of New York.

Between the lavish and reckless expenditure, of late years, in unnecessary, useless, or unproductive works, and the large amounts to which those placed in public trust have helped themselves and their friends, under one pretext or other, the Dominion (still a Province) is at this moment over head and ears in debt, the public liabilities at the present time amounting to about a hundred and fifty millions of dollars, requiring about six millions of dollars annually to pay the interest alone.

It is time that the people of the Province (the Dominion) should take up the matter, and devise and establish a new order of administration of the public affairs, abolishing all unnecessary offices and such as have been created rather for the benefit of the individual appointee than from any public necessity, or in the interests of the public weal; checking reckless expenditure in projects such as the Intercolonial Railroad, which, being completed, will only continue to be a burthen upon the finances of the Dominion to keep it open or in running order; at once putting a stop to the monstrous waste of the public money in surveying and re-surveying for a route for a Pacific Railroad through Canadian territory,* (a thing well known before to be impracticable, without traversing at least half the distance through uninhabitable rocky regions) and to the possibility of the public servants putting their hands into the public purse at their pleasure and helping themselves, without consulting their employers, to more than the amounts at which they had undertaken service.

*The only idea in connection with this talked of Pacific Railroad, which would seem to have reason in it, would be, if practicable, to make a road through Canadian territory from the Ottawa to the Sault Ste. Marie, and there, crossing the Straits, connect with the American Northern Pacific, by which means; and making a short branch line or two through Manitoba to intersect this road, all the advantages for our St. Lawrence and Atlantic ports, as well as for our North West territory itself, would be obtained, which could result through a road being made the whole distance through rocky Canadian regions; and probably additional advantages, in bringing a large portion of the trade of the N.W. American States in addition to our own, by this shorter route, to Atlantic ports, &c., &c.

Will any rational and intelligent man in the community say that such changes in the constitution as would reasonably promise to bring about such results are not desirable; or will any say that they are not practicable, and that even without difficulty, if sought and determined on in such a way as suggested?

By pursuing such a course, and adopting changes which would produce these results, the circumstances of the country might yet be redeemed; the public debt paid within a moderate number of years; the taxes reduced; and the good and desirable parts of the Province, above referred to, rendered an inviting field for a good and useful class of emigrants from Europe or from the neighboring States—people who, bringing in spare capital with them, would be induced to invest it in useful enterprises, developing the country's resources.

The Dominion revenue at present, from indirect taxation, (customs and excise, &c.) is about twenty millions of dollars.

Of these twenty millions about six millions, as before observed, are required to pay the interest of the present public debt. Take five millions more to create a sinking fund for the purpose of paying that debt, (thus getting rid of it within a moderate number of years) and nine millions will remain for the necessary expenses of government, legislation, administration of law, keeping in repair useful public works, or further developing the newer parts of the country, and for apportioning amongst the several municipalities towards relieving the inhabitants from burdensome direct taxation, &c.

Let this serious matter be taken into consideration by the County Councils throughout the country; and whereas, upon them, by the present constitution, devolves the duty of imposing direct taxation upon their neighbors, they may thus become instrumental in bringing about such changes as will reduce that taxation to a minimum, without curtailing the amount which will be available for local improvements, &c., &c.

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